

12 Annexation/Incorporation Element

Introduction

The Growth Management Act may encourage but it does not require annexation of urbanized areas to cities. The act's major focus is on preservation of resource lands, containment of urban sprawl within urban growth boundaries and provision of urban services within those urban growth boundaries.

With most cities in Clark County, the UGA's surrounding them are not typically developed at urban densities. Unlike the smaller cities, Vancouver is surrounded by large unincorporated areas that are highly developed at urban densities.

Until early 2006, annexation proposals were reviewed by the Boundary Review Board for Clark County, which was required to make decisions consistent with its statutory objectives (RCW 36.93.180). Under the provisions of the GMA, the Board of Clark County Commissioners disbanded the Boundary Review Board.

The following Countywide Planning Policies (CWPP), adopted by the Board of Clark County Commissioners, provides a framework for addressing regional issues for both the county and the cities. Additional policies set the framework for discussion of the details that will be included in the 20-Year Growth Management Plans for these jurisdictions.

12.0 Countywide Planning Policies

- 12.0.1 Community Comprehensive Plans shall contain an annexation element. In collaboration with adjacent cities, towns and Clark County, each city and town shall designate areas to be annexed. Each city and town shall adopt criteria for annexation and a plan for providing urban services and facilities within the annexation area. Policies for the transition of services shall be included in each annexation element. All cities and towns shall phase annexations to coincide with their ability to provide a full range of urban services to areas to be annexed.
- 12.0.2 Developing areas within urban growth and identified annexation areas should annex or commit to annex to adjacent cities in order to receive a full range of city-provided urban services. Unincorporated areas that are already urbanized are encouraged to annex to the appropriate city or town that provides the urban services. Incorporation of new cities and towns is a legal option allowed for under Washington law. Incorporation may be appropriate if an adequate financial base is identified or annexation is impractical.
- 12.0.3 The county shall encourage and support annexations to cities and town within Urban Growth Areas if consistent with the policies contained within the annexation element.
- 12.0.4 No city or town may annex territory beyond an urban growth area.
- 12.0.5 An inter-jurisdictional analysis and process which assesses the fiscal and other impacts related to annexation on the county, the city or town and special purpose districts shall be developed consistent with RCW 35.13 and RCW 35A.14 and the policies contained in the annexation proposal.

Goals and Policies

Goal: Annexations must be consistent with RCW 35.13, the orderly transition from county jurisdiction to the appropriate municipality, either through annexation or incorporation, if and when either should occur.

12.1 Procedures

- 12.1.1 The county will use a standardized system to assess each proposed annexation. At a minimum, the following issues should be addressed:
- preservation of natural neighborhoods and communities;
 - use of physical boundaries, including but not limited to bodies of water, highways and land contours;
 - creation and preservation of logical service areas;
 - prevention of abnormally irregular boundaries; and
 - transition of services such as public safety, parks and recreation, transportation and utility services.
- 12.1.2 Each city or town shall provide the county with its plan and timeline for annexations and, if applicable, any triggering mechanisms or thresholds which would initiate annexation.
- 12.1.3 Public information shall be provided jointly or individually by both the county and the annexing jurisdiction so that residents have adequate information.

12.2 Policies: Annexations will be analyzed based on: (1) whether sewer and water services are provided by a city and (2) whether the urban growth area at issue is characterized or adjacent to an area characterized by unincorporated urban growth and (3) compliance with state law.

- 12.2.1 The Fisher Swale area will be served by the City of Vancouver or the City of Camas by agreement of the two cities until one or both of these areas are annexed.
- 12.2.2 It is expected that urban growth areas will develop at urban levels of service and be annexed to the nearest jurisdiction. For urban growth areas that are not likely to annex, urban services may be provided by special purpose districts.
- 12.2.3 Properties within or adjacent to areas characterized by significant unincorporated urban growth that are not and are not likely to be provided by a city, may undergo urban development while unincorporated as long as adequate urban services including but not limited to, sewer and water are provided by special purpose districts. Whether or not these areas are ultimately annexed or incorporated is a decision for the property owners and the electorate of such an area. These properties include those located in the Hazel Dell, Salmon Creek and Felida areas.